



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

Ministry Agents Handbook
2020



Contents

Introduction	2
Placements	2
Stipend	3
Housing	5
Travel	5
Superannuation.....	5
Other placement allowances	6
Leave	6
Other benefits	8
Guidelines for part-time placements	9
Questions	11
Appendix A	12



Introduction

The Uniting Church in Australia affirms:

“that it belongs to the people of God on the way to the promised end.”
(Basis of Union, Para 18)

To assist in that journey the Uniting Church:

“will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to recognise among its members men and women called of God to preach the Gospel, to lead the people in worship, to care for the flock, to share in government and to serve those in need in the world.”
(Basis of Union, Para 14)

From these foundational statements in the *Basis of Union*, the Assembly has established Regulation 2.2 *Definition and Scope of the Specified Ministries* which details the different roles that can be undertaken by a person called to serve God. The various sub-clauses of this regulation provide the governing rules on candidature, training, ordination and selection. Please refer to the Regulations for full details.

In the Queensland Synod, the following ministry agent roles are available:

- Minister of the Word
- deacon
- pastor

This handbook outlines ministry agent benefits. Further details are available by clicking on links within each topic. The term “ministry agent”, unless specifically qualified otherwise, includes Minister of the Word, deacon and pastor engaged in a full-time or part-time placement. This handbook does not apply to lay persons employed in ministry locations designated as appropriate for the exercise of the ministry of pastor.

Placements

The *National Handbook of Procedures for the Placement of Ministers 2006* covers the requirements as per Regulation 2.6 of the Uniting Church in Australia.

In the Queensland Synod, the General Secretary or their delegate is the secretary of the Placements Committee which makes arrangements for the movement of ministry agents into placement positions. As part of an approved placement, ministry agents must fulfil their obligations under the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* (Qld) and hold a current blue card business or exemption card at all times. The Queensland Synod also requires a completed [Consent to discuss information form](#). Further details regarding blue card requirements can be found in the blue card guidance notes available at <https://ucaql.com.au/synod-services/people-and-culture/forms/>.

Any enquiries concerning the occupancy of a placement, the placement guidelines or other requirements for ministry agents should be directed to the office of the General Secretary.



Stipend

Regulation 2.7 specifically provides the basis for the stipend and conditions which the Synod is authorised to determine. The stipend is set for Queensland Synod ministry agents by the Remuneration and Nominations Committee (RNC) under By-law Q3.3.3 (3)(a).

The church has traditionally spoken of the stipend as a “living allowance” paid to ministry agents to cover their needs as they exercise their ministry, rather than a salary. RNC reviews the stipend and allowances that will apply from 1 January each year and takes into consideration external benchmarks outlined in the [Ministry Stipend and Allowances Policy \(E/8.5\)](#) and [Procedure \(E/8.5.1\)](#).

To support the living allowance provisions of the stipend, the National Assembly has determined to utilise the Australian Taxation provisions so that ministry agents may benefit from sacrificing allowances and a proportion of the stipend for use as expense fringe benefits. Details of the use of fringe benefits are available in the [Ministerial Fringe Benefits Handbook 2019](#).

Payment of stipend

Stipends and allowances are paid on a monthly basis and are administered by the Payroll office of the Synod. The stipend and various allowances are covered in more detail at [Ministry Agents Payments Notice](#).

A ministry agent’s monthly net stipend is paid directly to their nominated personal bank account to be available by the 20th of each month.

Congregations or other appointing bodies are required to enter into an arrangement with the Synod office to enable direct debit of the stipend amount (along with other associated costs) immediately following the processing of the monthly stipend. Direct debits usually occur between the 18th and 25th of each month. Where congregations do not have a direct debit arrangement, the congregation is required to pay the monthly cash remittance immediately on receipt.

To ensure smooth operation of the payroll process, each ministerial agent must complete the following forms before their stipend payments can commence.

[Personal Details Form](#)

[Superannuation \(super\) standard choice form](#)

[Tax file number declaration](#)

[Ministerial fringe – application to participate 2020](#)

These forms must be accompanied by a fully completed CAD (congregation/agency details) form.

Stipend margins

The Queensland Synod generally accepts that in some situations the payment of a loading (margin) is appropriate. Such a loading is an expression of the responsibility that those in certain ministries carry on behalf of the wider church and of the trust that the church has placed in those people. Further details can be found in the Ministry [Stipend and Allowances Policy \(E/8.5\)](#) and [Procedure \(E/8.5.1\)](#).

Deductions from stipend

In addition to the normal deduction options, other deductions such as additional superannuation contributions may be arranged.

Deductions must be authorised in writing and forwarded to the Payroll office by the **5th day of the month** to be actioned. For further support, please contact a member of the People and Culture team.



Lay staff equivalent

The following information provides a ministry agent with a comparison between the stipend (including allowances) and an employee remuneration, taking into account a ministry agent participating in fringe benefits. The comparison provides the same net payment (after tax):

50% Stipend and Allowance – Comparison calculations 2020

50% Stipend and Allowance Payment with Fringe calculation	
Stipend	\$ 30,102.00
Housing allowance	\$ 17,100.00
Travel allowance	\$ 5,844.00
CEM	\$ 480.00
Gross	\$ 53,526.00
Participates in fringe benefits with election of 50% Stipend and full allowances	

Lay Employee equivalent	
Salary	\$ 68,866.00
Housing allowance	\$ -
Travel allowance	\$ -
CEM	\$ -
Gross	\$ 68,866.00
Not eligible for fringe benefits	

Non reportable Fringe benefits	-\$ 38,355.00
Reportable Gross to ATO	\$ 15,171.00
Tax	\$ -
Net pay	\$ 15,171.00
Net pay + Fringe benefits	\$ 53,526.00

Non reportable Fringe benefits	\$ -
Reportable Gross to ATO	\$ 68,866.00
Tax	-\$ 15,340.00
Net pay	\$ 53,526.00
Net pay + Fringe benefits	\$ 53,526.00

50% Stipend and Allowance Payment with 0% Fringe calculation	
Stipend	\$ 30,102.00
Housing allowance	\$ 17,100.00
Travel allowance	\$ 5,844.00
CEM	\$ 480.00
Gross	\$ 53,526.00
Does not participate in fringe benefits	

Non reportable Fringe benefits	\$ -
Reportable Gross to ATO	\$ 53,526.00
Tax	-\$ 10,032.00
Net pay	\$ 43,494.00
Net pay + Fringe benefits	\$ 43,494.00



Issuing of payment summaries

From the 2019/2020 financial year, payment summaries will no longer be produced. With the introduction of one-touch payroll, tax information is sent to the ATO at the end of each pay period and will be available through your MyGov account.

Special payments

Where a congregation provides additional payment to a ministry agent for services such as baptism, wedding or funeral, the church treasurer must complete a [Special Payments Form](#) to ensure that the payment is included in the ministry agents payment summary and taxed appropriately. Further details can be found in the [Ministry Stipend and Allowances Policy](#).

Housing

Presbytery/Synod placements

In accordance with By-law Q5.4.1 it is the responsibility of the congregation or other appointing body to provide a suitable residence for each ministry agent placed within its bounds. The residence within the bounds of the church is called a manse. The [Ministry Agent Housing Policy](#) provides further information:

- when a ministry agent is in at least a 50 per cent placement and a manse is available
- when a housing allowance will be paid towards the cost of accommodation in lieu of providing a manse
- when a ministry agent couple live in one manse or in their own home.

The current allowance is detailed in the [Ministry Agents Payments Notice](#).

Travel

Ministry agents in placement are eligible to receive a fixed annual allowance which provides for the basic costs of owning a vehicle (registration, insurance, depreciation, etc.) and the operating costs (fuel, etc.) for the first 10,000 kilometres of travel. Higher allowances apply for distances between 10,000 and 20,000 kilometres. For distances in excess of 20,000 kilometres a set rate per kilometre applies.

These allowances are determined by the RNC from time to time. Current rates are available at [Ministry Agents Payments Notice](#).

By mutual agreement, a congregation may opt to supply a vehicle to the ministry agent. This arrangement will replace the payment of the travel allowance.

Superannuation

Choice of funds

The NGS Fund is the default superannuation fund for the Queensland Synod. Ministry agents may choose any fund by using the standard Commonwealth Government [Superannuation \(super\) standard choice form](#).

Contributions will be at the prescribed rate. For further information, please contact the Synod Payroll team.

Beneficiary Fund

The Uniting Church in Australia established the Beneficiary Fund to provide members with superannuation benefits and to help them save for their retirement. The Beneficiary Fund is not a complying MySuper product. From 1 July 2015 the Uniting Church in Australia has joined with Mercer to provide this product. Please contact the Synod Payroll team for more information.



Other placement allowances

Zone allowance

A zone allowance is payable to ministry agents when their placement is in an area where living expenses are deemed to be above the average cost of living for the state. The current allowances are found in Appendix A. Where an allowance is applicable, the prescribed allowance must be included in the placement documents.

Remote area holiday allowance

In addition to the zone allowance, ministry agents serving in a small group of isolated congregations are paid a remote area holiday allowance in recognition of the additional costs incurred to take annual leave due to the travel distance to a major coastal city.

Ministry agents in the defined isolated congregations also are eligible for an extra week of holiday leave to cover travel. The allowance payable is found in Appendix A.

Leave

Annual leave and public holidays

Annual leave shall be four weeks per year and is inclusive of four Sundays but excludes public holidays, as outlined in the [Ministry Agent Leave Policy \(E/8.6\)](#). For part-time ministry agents, annual leave is paid on the same proportion as the placement. For annual leave, the following requirements apply:

- Annual leave should be taken during the year in which it falls due and must be endorsed by the church council.
- Once endorsed, all annual leave applications must be recorded in the payroll self-service portal for record-keeping purposes.
- Annual leave records are to be kept by the congregation or the appointing body.
- Annual leave may be held over to the following year, but no more than eight weeks shall be accumulated at any time without written approval.
- Annual leave accrued within the placement must be taken within the placement unless otherwise negotiated to be transferred to the next placement.
- All stipend benefits and allowances apply during periods of annual leave.
- Annual leave for ministry agents does not attract a leave loading.
- The Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee should be advised of leave arrangements.
- No lump sum payment in lieu of annual leave not taken will be made at the conclusion of a placement or at the time of retirement.

Long service leave

The purpose of long service leave is to refresh a ministry agent after extended service. Regulation 2.7.1(c) provides for the application of leave provisions by the Synod or other determining body. For the Queensland Synod, By-law Q5.3 details the long service leave provisions. Further details can be found in the [Ministry Agent Leave Policy \(E/8.6\)](#) and [Procedure \(E/8.6.1\)](#).



Sick leave

- All ministry agents are entitled to sick leave and shall continue to receive their stipend and other benefits from the congregation or body responsible for the placement.
- For some ministry agents, superannuation fund provisions may be available for temporary and permanent disability payments including the provision for temporary retirement in the event of prolonged illness. This avenue should be utilised where it is anticipated that the period of incapacity will be prolonged.
- Where a ministry agent is anticipated to have a lengthy period of sick leave, the presbytery should discuss options with the ministry agent and the congregation or other appointing body, taking into consideration the life and witness of the congregation or other placement activities.
- Where a supply minister is required to cover sick leave for a ministry agent, the congregation or other body may submit an application for support from the Sickness and Accident Assistance Plan (SAAP) to meet up to 100 per cent of normal stipend and allowances for the period of supply.
- The SAAP excludes assistance for
- absences covered by WorkCover as these payments are made directly to the ministry agent by WorkCover.
- A medical certificate must be submitted for the total period of absence on sick leave for a claim to be processed, and further medical certificates must be submitted on time for continuance of the claim under the SAAP.
- All sick leave will be reviewed after three months. Only under demonstrated exceptional circumstances will a SAAP claim be allowed to continue for a period of six months.
- Where ministry agents have temporary and permanent disablement insurance with their superannuation fund, these provisions must be accessed when the waiting period has been fulfilled.
- Where ministry agents belong to the Beneficiary Fund, provision is made for temporary retirement in the event of prolonged illness. Under no circumstances will SAAP benefits be paid beyond the earlier of these two dates:
 - the date of the ministry agent taking up benefits from the Beneficiary Fund or other superannuation fund; or
 - 12 months from the date that an accident resulted in an injury or the date on which the initial medical report in relation to an illness was obtained. The SAAP fund has an exemption period of 14 days following the date of illness or accident. To add clarity, this means that SAAP will not provide any financial assistance towards the cost of supply for the first 14-day period. Where sick leave necessitates a long period of convalescence, it is a requirement that the ministry agent and the congregation utilise the services of the Return to Work Provider for a graduated return-to- placement strategy.
- Further details of the provisions of the SAAP and the Return to Work Provider are available by contacting the Risk and Insurance Team [Contact us](#) at the Synod office.

Continuing education and study leave

- All ministry agents are required to undertake programs for continuing education. Further information can be found in the [Continuing Education for Ministry Policy \(POL-MAP-01\)](#) and [Procedure \(PRO-MAP-01\)](#). A continuing education learning agreement is maintained by the ministry agent in ULearn, the online learning management system of the Synod. For further information about ULearn, contact learning@ucaqld.com.au.
- Continuing education (study) leave of up to 14 days per year, as outlined in the [Ministry Agent Leave Policy \(E/8.6\)](#), may be approved by the Presbytery in consultation with the church council or appointing body.
- A Travel Assistance Fund assists eligible ministry agents in meeting travel costs (for example flights, accommodation, meals). Travel for continuing education must be more than three hours from the ministry agent's residence to the place of required study. Refer to the [Continuing Education for Ministry Procedure \(PRO-MAP-01\)](#) for more information and the application form.



Workers' compensation

The Synod maintains a single policy with WorkCover Queensland for its workers' compensation insurance. For ministry agents who are injured while performing their ministerial duties, an application is to be made to WorkCover Queensland using the details provided at [Workers' Compensation](#) for the Synod.

Compassionate leave or bereavement leave

This is a matter of negotiation between the ministry agent and the church council or agency.

Maternity, adoption and paternity leave

The maternity, adoption and paternity leave policy outlines the eligibility for each leave type. Maternity leave applies to female ministry agents and allows for 40 weeks unpaid leave and 12 weeks paid leave. Adoption leave applies to male and female ministry agents and provides for 40 weeks unpaid leave and 12 weeks paid leave.

Paternity leave applies to male ministry agents and provides for 52 weeks unpaid leave.

For full details including notification requirements, please refer to the [Ministry Agent Leave Policy \(E/8.6\)](#) and [Procedure \(E/8.6.1\)](#).

Other benefits

Alcorn Fellowship Trust

The Alcorn Fellowship Trust is administered by an independent committee to provide grants to assist those in specified ministries of the Uniting Church in Australia and other committed lay persons to engage in approved short or long-term study or research programs in Australia or overseas whereby such applicants will be better equipped to fulfil their particular vocations in the mission of the Christian church. Applications for assistance from this Trust must be in writing to the General Secretary.

Benevolent Fund

The Synod maintains a Benevolent Fund to meet emergency expenses for ministry agents who are deemed to be in financial need. Grants from the fund are determined by the Moderator and General Secretary of the Synod. Ministry agents seeking a grant from the fund should contact their presbytery office or the General Secretary.

Millard-Smith Bequest Fund

The fund exists to assist ministry agents without placement particularly for the purpose of rehabilitation or refocus in order that the ministry agent might either return to ministry within the church or make the transition to entry into secular employment.

Applications for this assistance should be submitted by the relevant presbytery to the General Secretary.

Relocation/removal arrangements

For ministry agents in an approved placement where the congregation or agency is contributing to the Mission Support Fund the Synod normally accepts responsibility for arranging relocation and paying removal costs. Further details can be found in the [Relocation and Removals Policy](#). Contact the Synod office via [email](#).

Wesley Hospital support

All persons in need of financial assistance at the time of hospitalisation should ask to speak to the financial advisor.



Guidelines for part-time placements

Agreeing to the hours/days of service

Both congregations and ministry agents may seek a part-time placement. Such arrangements may be negotiated and mutually agreed between the parties. All part-time agreements must be documented to indicate the ministry commitments required across the part-time week of the placement.

Part-time placements may include supply arrangements.

Determining the hours of placement

The 21-unit principle is one method of arranging ministry services to determine how much time the ministry agent is expected to serve and what proportion of the stipend and allowances are required.

In this system, each day has three units: morning, afternoon and evening. While there is great variation in when and how much ministry agents serve in their congregations, an example of a typical week may look like in the following table.

Day of the week	Number of units
Monday	0 units
Tuesday	3 units
Wednesday	2 units
Thursday	3 units
Friday	3 units
Saturday	1 unit
Sunday	2 units
1 week	14 units in total

The 21-unit scheme:

- avoids the time-clock approach
- gives flexibility to the minister
- is simple to understand
- ensures that critical placement times are covered
- gives a starting point for stipend arrangements
- is fairly based on the “average” workload of ministers.

It is recommended that this weekly break-up be used by the congregation to decide how many units it requires service in each week and how time should be allocated to the various tasks required. Preparation time should be viewed as a unit or units of placement. If the 21-unit principle is not used, then some other mutually agreeable method may be employed to determine the level of part-time placement.



Table 2 equates the units of a week to the proportion of the stipend payable.

Number of units	Proportion of full stipend
1	10%
2	15%
3	20%
4	30%
5	35%
6	45%
7	50%
8	55%
9	65%
10	70%
11	80%
12	85%
13	90%
14	100%

Stipend, allowances and other contributions

- The stipend, allowances and other contributions are determined by the percentage of full-time employment worked by the ministry agent.
- The annual stipend is divided by 52 weeks and part-time ministry placements will be the appropriate portion. For example, if you wish to use the 21-unit principle, a minister who is required to work between five and seven units per week will be engaged in a half-time or 0.5 position. Approximately 10 to 11 units will be three quarters or 0.75 of a full-time placement.
- Four weeks annual leave is provided to all ministry agents in full-time or part-time ministry. The payment of annual leave for part-time placements is at the same proportion of the full stipend for the part-time ministry agent, as outlined in the [Ministry Agent Leave Policy \(E/8.6\)](#).
- If the supply ministry only covers the leading of worship, then payment according to casual teaching rates set by the Synod may be appropriate.
- In terms of payment of the housing allowance for part-time ministry agents, the housing allowance will be worked on the same percentage of service to be performed. Where a part-time ministry agent will be living in a manse, the proportion of contribution by the ministry agent will need to be negotiated between the congregation and the ministry agent. Where there is minimal or no other income available to the household, some other adjustment may be made by mutual agreement.

Details of the agreement

Agreement on a supply, intentional interim or part-time ministry should be confirmed by an exchange of letters. The congregation should outline the tasks, terms and conditions of the supply ministry. (A written agreement is helpful to both parties. Mutually agreed variations to the original agreement should be confirmed in writing.)

Preparation for the arrival of a supply/part-time ministry agent

Personal welcomes and common courtesies should take place when the ministry agent arrives.

A list covering key congregation personnel, times of key events and information such as supermarket locations and garbage removal times could be helpful.



Casual rate for services

Students in training at Trinity College Queensland (other than those undertaking a field placement) and retired ministers should be paid on a casual rate for occasional services as nominated in the stipend information. Such information is found at [Ministry Agents Payments Notice](#)

Questions

Any questions not covered in this handbook in relation to entitlements should be directed to the presbytery leader or the Payroll team via [email](#).



Appendix A

Zone allowances and
remote holiday allowances
applicable from 2014

Remote holiday allowances

Western parishes at \$540 per annum
Cunnamulla
Charleville
Barcaldine
Longreach
Cloncurry
Winton
Mt Isa
Hughenden

Gulf parishes at \$914 per annum
Thursday Island
Napranum
Mapoon
Aurukun
Mornington Island
Weipa

Zone allowances

Location	Monthly allowance
Atherton	\$ 170.24
Aurukun	\$ 806.15
Ayr	\$ 158.62
Barcaldine	\$ 270.95
Biloela	\$ 118.90
Bluewater	\$ 123.34
Bowen	\$ 107.07
Boyne Island	\$ 67.87
Cairns	\$ 125.10
Cannonvale	\$ 151.23
Charleville	\$ 202.26
Charters Towers	\$ 206.50
Chinchilla	\$ 113.01
Clermont	\$ 238.00
Cloncurry	\$ 284.18
Collinsville	\$ 157.74
Cunnamulla	\$ 270.59
Dalby	\$ 32.80
Edmonton	\$ 131.96

Emerald	\$ 155.67
Freshwater	\$ 126.80
Goondiwindi	\$ 115.90
Gladstone	\$ 67.87
Hughenden	\$ 324.15
Ingham	\$ 174.27
Innisfail	\$ 176.64
Jandowae	\$ 60.43
Kingaroy	\$ 50.56
Longreach	\$ 266.41
Mackay	\$ 71.53
Mapoon	\$ 806.15
Mareeba	\$ 156.65
Moranbah	\$ 140.38
Mornington Island	\$ 823.87
Mossman	\$ 168.48
Mount Isa	\$ 214.14
Moura	\$ 166.52
Mundubbera	\$ 101.39
Murgon	\$ 75.98
Nanango	\$ 62.40
Napranum	\$ 806.15
Proserpine	\$ 145.03
Rockhampton	\$ 65.59
Roma	\$ 109.29
Sarina	\$ 90.75
Smithfield	\$ 130.00
St George	\$ 184.49
Stanthorpe	\$ 64.87
Tara	\$ 84.86
Thursday Island (Torres)	\$ 669.23
Tully	\$ 233.87
Townsville	\$ 107.07
Walkerston	\$ 76.49
Wandoan	\$ 178.35
Weipa	\$ 455.14
Winton	\$ 354.01
Wondai	\$ 66.63
Yeppoon	\$ 84.60



The Uniting Church in Australia
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Uniting in **Christ**
acting with love
living with **hope**
witnessing in faith
working for justice

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